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A MAYA ACCOUNT OF THE CREATION

BY RALPH L. ROYS

AS creation myths are always of more than ordinary interest I wish to draw attention to the following account of the creation of the world according to the conception of the Maya Indians of Yucatan. It is found on plates 60, 61 and 62 of the Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel (University of Pennsylvania. The Museum. *Anthropological Publications*, vol. v).

This book dates only from the latter half of the eighteenth century but it is a compilation of extracts from earlier Maya books which were also probably known as Books of Chilam Balam. It contains several historical accounts of the periods both before and after the Spanish conquest of Yucatan, a great many prophecies and a number of mythological stories.

Three of these historical accounts and several of the prophecies together with translations appear in Brinton's *Maya Chronicles* and a number of the prophecies are to be found in various histories of Yucatan, but only one of the mythological stories has been published and translated as far as I know. This is the contribution of D. Juan Martinez y Hernandez to the International Congress of Americanists of 1912 and is entitled "La Creación del Mundo segun los mayas. Páginas inéditas del M.S. de Chumayel." In this paper he has translated a passage from the manuscript which is to be found on plates 42, 43 and 44 of the University of the Pennsylvania reproduction and although, as the title indicates, this is a creation story, it does not resemble the one which follows.

Christian influence has affected the form of the following account to some extent but not the content and the most interesting feature is the apparent reference to the event pictured on page 74 of the Dresden Codex. It would seem certain that sooner or later some parallel passages must be found to occur in the Books of Chilam Balam and the Maya picture manuscripts.

TEXT ¹

Bay tzolci yax ah miatz. merchise: yax ah bouat: Napuctun. sacerdote. yax ah kin lay kay uchci u cihil uinal. ti ma to ahaccab cuchie. ca hoppi u ximbal tu ba tu hunal = ca yalah u chich: ca yalah u enaa: ca yalah u mim: ca yalah u muu: Bal bin c alab. ca bin c ylab uinic ti be: Cu thanob tamuk u ximbalob: cuchie: minan uinic cuci: Catun kuchiob te ti likine: Ca hoppi yalicob: Mac ti mani uay lae: he yocob lae: Ppis tau oci: Ci bin u than u colel cab. Ca bin u ppisah yoc ca yumil ti D⁸, citbil. lay u chun yalci. Xoc lahcab: oc lae. lahca oc = Lay tzolan cihi. tumen Oxlahun Oc = uchci u nup tanba yoc: Likciob te ti likine: Ca yalah u kaba = ti minan u kaba kin cuchie: ximbalnahci: y u chiich: y u enaa: y u mim: y u muu: Ci uinal: çihci kin = u kaba çihci = caan y luum: eb haa: luum: tunich: y che: çihci u bal kaknab: y luum:

Hun Chuen. u kokçici uba tu kuil: u mentci caan y luum:

Ca Eb: u mentci yax eb^{2,3} = emci likul tanyollcaan: tanyol haa: minan luum y tunich: y che:

Ox Men (Ben): u mentci tulacal bal. hibahun. bal: u bal caanob y u bal kaknab y u bal luum

Can Ix: uchci u nixpahal caan y luum:

Ho Men = uchci u meyah tulacal.

Uac Cib. uchci u mentci: yax cib. uchci u çasilhal: ti minankin: y u:

Uac (Uuc). Caban. yax çihci cab: ti minan toon cuci:

Uaxac Ecnab: eçlahci. u kab. y yoc: Ca u chichaah (chichah), yokol luum:

Bolon Cauac: yax tumtabci: metnal:

Lahun Ahau: uchci u binob: u lobil uinicob ti metnal tumen D⁸ citbil: ma chicanac cuchie:

Bulu(c) (Ym)yx uchci u patic tunich y che: lay u mentah ychil kin =

Lahcabil Yk: uchci u çihçic yk. = Lay u chun u kabatic yk. tumen minan cimil ychil lae:

Oxlahun Ak(b)al uchci u chaic haa = ca yoksah luum = ca u patah ca uinic hi:

Hunnil Kan = u yax mentci u leppel yol tumenel u lobil u çihçah =

Ca Chicchan: uchci u chictahal u lobil hibal yilah ychil u uich cahe =

Ox Cimil u tusci cimil uchci. u tusci yax cimil: ca yumil ti Ds.
(Can Manik)

Ho Lamat: lay u tusci uuclam chac kaal kaknab =

Uac Muluc, uchci u mucchahal kopob tulacal: ti ma to ahac cabe: lay uchci yocol u tusthanil ca yumil ti D⁸ tulacal = ti minan tun than ti caan: ti minan tunich y che: cuchi:

Catun binob u tumtubaob ca yalah tun bayla = oxlahun tuc⁴::: uuc tuc hun = lay yalah: ca hok u than ti minan than ti:: ca katab u chun tumen yax ahau-kin maix hepahac u nukul than tiob: uchebal u thanic ubaobé:: ca binob tan yol caan ca u machaah u kab tuba tanbaobe: Catun ualah tan chumuc peten keklayob lae:: Heklayob ah toocob cantulob lae⁵ =

.....

Can Chicchan.....O Ah toc E

Canil.....Oc Ah toc Pio

Ca(n) Men.....O Ah toc MER

Can Ahau.....O Ah toc

.....lay ahauob cantulob lae.....

Uaxac Muluc Hoil Cauac

Bolon Oc Uac Ahau

Lahun Chuen 2 Uay (Uuc) Ymix

Buluc Eb Uaxacil Yk

Lahca Men (Ben) 4 Bolon Akabal

Oxlahun Yx 5 Lahun Kan

Hun Men 6 Buluc Chicchan

Ca Cib Lahca Cimity

Ox Caban 7 Oxlahun Manik

Can Eonab Hun Lamat

Lay çihî uinal y uchci yahal cab: tzolci caan y luum. y cheob y tunich. Cihî tulacal tumen ca yumil ti D⁸ lae Lay cubil ti minan caan y luum: ti bay yanil tu Diosil tu muyalil tuba tu hunal Ca u çihçah (çihçah) balcah tuçinil: Ca pecnahi tu caanil tu kuil ti bay noh u chucil yanil ah tepale.

U tzolan kin çançamal lilil u xocol u chun ti likine hebix tzolanile.

TRANSLATION

Thus it was set in order by the first wise man, merchise, the first prophet, Napuctun, sacerdote, the first priest. This is the song of how the creation of the uinal came to pass when the world was not yet created. Then he began to march by his own force. And then said his mother's mother, then said his mother's sister, then said his father's mother (or mother's grandmother), then said his sister-in-law, "How shall we make manifest and see man upon the road?" These were their words while they marched, but there was no man then. Then they arrived there in the east and began to speak: "Who has passed here? Here are footsteps; measure it off with your feet." These were the words of the mistress of the world. Then our Lord, Dios supreme, measured it off with his feet. This is what he first said: "The count is twelve paces, twelve paces." This was set in order by Oxlahun Oc. His feet came up even with one another. They departed from the east and spoke its name when the day had no name. He marched on with his mother's mother, with his mother's sister, with his father's mother and with his sister-in-law. The uinal was created; the day was created; that was its name. Sky and earth, ebb water, land rocks and trees were created. The things of sea and land were created.

On One Chuen he raised himself up to divinity; he created heaven and earth.

On Two Eb he created the first ebb. It came from the midst of the heavens in the midst of the water. There was neither land, rocks nor trees.

On Three Ben he created all things, as many as there are, the things of the heavens, the things of the sea, the things of the earth.

On Four Ix came the upsetting of heaven and earth.

On Five Men came the making of everything.

On Six Cib it came to pass that he made the first candle. There came light when there was neither sun nor moon.

On Seven Caban the world was first created when we had none.

On Eight Ecnab his hand and foot were firmly set. Then he picked up the small things on the earth.

On Nine Cauac hell was first created.

On Ten Ahau wicked men were made to go to hell by Dios supreme that they might not be pointed out.

On Eleven Ymyx he created rocks and trees. This he did within the day.

On Twelve Yk life was created. This the reason he named it life, because there was no death within it.

On Thirteen Akbal he took the water, and raised up the earth, and created two of mankind (or "he raised up the earth, shaped it and became man").

On One Kan he first created anger on account of the evil he had created.

On Two Chicchan came the finding of the evil he saw in the place.

On Three Cimi he ordained death. Our Lord Dios first established death.

(The next day in the series, Four Manik, is missing, but there is a space where it should be.)

Five Lamat was when he established all the seven great waters of the seas.

On Six Muluc came the drowning of all who were submerged, when the world was not yet created. Then came the creation of the word of our Lord Dios when there was no word in heaven, when there were neither rocks nor trees. Then they went to consider and he spoke as follows: "Thirteen quantities (or heaps), seven quantities, one." This he said and he raised up his word when there was no word. Then the beginning was sought by the first day Ahau, but he did not conclude the declaration of his word to them so that they might declare themselves. Then they went into the midst of heaven and joined hands with one another. And then he set them up in the midst of the land and they are the Four Burners.

Four Chicchan,	The Burner.	Four Men,	The Burner.
Four Oc,	The Burner.	Four Ahau,	The Burner.

These are the four Ahaus (or kings)

Eight Muluc	Thirteen Yx	Five Cauac	Ten Kan
Nine Oc	One Men	Six Ahau	Eleven Chicchan
Ten Chuen	Two Cib	Seven Ymix	Twelve Cimi
Eleven Eb	Three Caban	Eight Yk	Thirteen Manik
Twelve Ben	Four Eonab	Nine Akbal	One Lamat

Thus came the creation of the uinal and of the world. Sky, earth, trees and rocks were set in order. All things were created by our Lord Dios. He was heard when there was neither sky nor earth as he was Dios in the clouds by his own power when he created the whole world. Then there was noise and movement in heaven and before God at the great accomplishment of him who was the ruler.

This is the day count, day by day, in which the count begins in the east.

NOTES

1. In the Maya text only the capitalization and paragraphing are my own. I have kept the spelling and punctuation of the original, but have inserted a few obvious corrections in parentheses.

2. I am unable to find any definition of the word eb which would explain the expression, "eb water," and "the first eb" which "came from the midst of the heavens in the midst of the water," but I believe it refers to the event pictured on plate 74 of the Dresden Codex where the old goddess with the tiger claws is seen emptying a jar of water upon the earth amid a general deluge of water from the heavens. The day sign Eb is pictured in the stream of water which she pours out of her jar, as has been noted by Seler, Forstemann and others. These writers have explained the picture as depicting the end of the world in the far distant future, but this passage in the Chumayel would indicate that it was one of the events in the course of the creation of the world. The old goddess with the claws may well be the "mistress of the world" mentioned in our text. The Dictionary of Motul defines eb as "escalera." Seler (*Gesammelte Abhandlung*, vol. I. p. 482), gives eb, ebil, ebal and yebal as meaning a series of indentations, a flight of steps of a stairway.

3. Note the word play on the Maya day names in the following cases:

Ca Eb u mentci yax eb.

Can Ix uchci u nixpahal caan y luum.

Ho Men uchci u meyah tulacal.

Uac Cib uchci u mentci yax cib.

Uaxac Eonab e lahi u kab y yoc

Lahcabil Yk uchci u çihçic yk.

Ca Chicchan uchci u chictahal u lobil hibal yilah ychil u uich cahe.

Ox Cimil u tusci cimil

Uac Muluc uchci u mucchahal kopob tulacal.

This use of a homonym or a derivative of the Maya day name in relating the event occurring on that day recalls the many undeciphered glyphs both in the picture manuscripts and on the monuments in which a day sign appears as a component part. It also suggests that this part of the account at least was once recorded in a hieroglyphic text.

4. The expression "Oxlahun tuc, uuc tuc, hun," which I have translated as "thirteen quantities, seven quantities, one," must refer to the thirteen numbers which form the numerical prefixes of the day names. In a list of twenty days, seven of these numbers must be repeated, thus thirteen and seven make one entire series of days. Compare this with the similar expression at the end of the creation story translated by D. Juan Martinez y Hernández. "Oxlahun-pic-*oac* tu uuc u xocan yahal cab," which he translates, "Trece pic-*oac* ú órdenes numerales por siete veces, son el transcurso del principio del mundo." Instead of "thirteen pic-*oac* multiplied by seven," I think this should read "thirteen pic-*oac* added to seven," just as the Maya number ca-tu-kal means twenty-two and not two times twenty. I believe that "tuc,—monton de cosas menudas aiuntadas como sal, tierra, leña ettc" (Dic. de Motul) and pic-*oac*-cab,—numero grande, innumerable (Pio Pérez, p. 277, as quoted in Martínez), are used with approximately the same meaning in the cases above cited.

5. I do not know just what is meant by the four burners but I am convinced that they are closely connected with the time period called the uinal. In the Chilam Balam of Tizimin there is an account of the four burners in which I find the following: "He lai ah tocob lae ti culanob tu chun uinale." "These are the burners which are set at the beginning of the uinal."